

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-02 SS-15 CCO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
/030 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/SOV:TTHOMPSON:AJ
APPROVED BY EUR/SOV:SMCCALL
PA/PRESS:MBADER
S/S-O: TMARTIN

-----081966 190028Z /13

P 182351Z JUL 78 ZFF5
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD PRIORITY
USDEL SECRETARY

UNCLAS STATE 181866 TOSEC 080160

FOR HODDING CARTER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, UR, US

SUBJECT: WHITNEY/PIPER CASES: NOON PRESS BRIEFING

FOLLOWING ARE PORTIONS OF NOON PRESS BRIEFING DEALING WITH
WHITNEY/PIPER CASES.

BEGIN TEXT. QUESTION: IS THERE ANY REACTION TO THE PIPER-
WHITNEY RULING TODAY?

ANSWER: YES. WE DEPLORE THE ACTION WHICH THE COURT HAS
TAKEN IN THE CASE OF THE TWO AMERICAN JOURNALISTS. WE ARE
MONITORING THIS CASE VERY CLOSELY. WE HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT
WITH THE TWO NEWSPAPERS, THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE
BALTIMORE SUN, AND WE ARE NOW CONSIDERING WHAT STEPS WE
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MIGHT TAKE NEXT.

NOW JUST AS A FACTUAL READOUT ON JHAT HAS HAPPENED, WE
UNDERSTAND FROM PRESS REPORTS THAT ON JULY 18 THE MOSCOW
COURT UPHELD THE SLANDER SUITS, ORDERED PRINTED REACTIONS
WITHIN FIVE DAYS OF MESSRS. WHITNEY'S AND PIPER'S STORIES
THAT WERE THE BASIS FOR THE SLANDER SUIT AND ORDERED THEM

TO PAY LEGAL COSTS EQUIVALENT TO ABOUT \$1,670.00 EACH.
YOU WILL RECALL THAT THE SLANDER SUITS WERE BASED ON STORIES
BY WHITNEY AND PIPER THAT UNOFFICIAL SOURCES THOUGHT THAT

DISSIDENT ZVIAD GAMSAKHURDIA'S TELEVISED RECONTATION WAS
HEAVILY EDITED UNDER DURESS.

PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT HE TESTIFIED AT THE JULY 18
COURT SESSION IN THE SLANDER CASE, PRESUMABLY TO THE
EFFECT THAT HIS TELEVISED RECONTATION HAD BEEN GENUINE.

Q. TOM, CAN YOU GIVE US SOME IDEA OF WHAT YOU MEAN BY:
"WE ARE NOW CONSIDERING WHAT STEPS WE MIGHT TAKE NEXT?"

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO BE DRAWN INTO A DISCUSSION
OF WHAT STEPS WE MIGHT BE CONSIDERING TAKING.

Q. WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SOVIET
GOVERNMENT REQUEST THAT AN AMERICAN NEWSPAPER PRINT A
RETRACTION FOR AN ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE UNITED
STATES?

A. WE DON'T HAVE A REACTION. THAT, OBVIOUSLY, IS NOT A
QUESTION FOR US TO DECIDE. THAT IS A DECISION FOR THE SUN
AND THE TIMES TO TAKE, NOT FOR US. WE ARE NOT GOING TO
INVOLVE OURSELVES IN THAT DECISION WHATSOEVER.
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Q. TOM, A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO THE DEPARTMENT CALLED IN
SOME CORRESPONDENTS WORKING FOR TASS AND WENT OVER A LIST
OF THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN. DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS TO
DO THE SAME THING NOW? ARE YOU CONSULTING WITH --
PARTICULARLY THE SOVIET NEWS AGENCY AT ALL?

A. NO, NOT THAT I AM AWARE OF.

I AM NOT GOING TO BE DRAWN INTO A DISCUSSION OF WHAT STEPS
WE MIGHT BE CONSIDERING TAKING NEXT.

Q. TOM, ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF THIS CASE, WHICH YOU
DIDN'T MENTION IN YOUR SUMMARY, WAS THAT THE WHITNEY AND
PIPER STORIES WERE PICKED UP AND BROADCAST BACK INTO THE
SOVIET UNION BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA. AS FAR AS YOU KNOW,
IS THE VOA INCLUDED IN THAT SOVIET REQUEST FOR RETRACTION?

A. NOT THAT I HAVE HEARD, BOB, BUT YOU COULD ASK THE
SOVIETS.

I AM NOT AWARE THAT ANYONE FROM THE VOICE OF AMERICA WAS

A DEFENDANT IN THE SUIT. THIS ACTION RELATES SOLELY TO THE DEFENDANTS IN THE SUIT, MESSRS. WHITNEY AND PIPER.

Q. COULD YOU TAKE A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE DEPARTMENT HAS GIVEN ANY DIRECTIVE TO THE VOA AS TO WHAT TO BROADCAST

ABOUT THIS CASE, OR ABOUT THE SLANDER SUIT?

A. I WILL CHECK IT, YES.

Q. TOM, CAN YOU TELL US WHETHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT SEES A TREND IN THESE VERDICTS BY THE RUSSIANS TODAY IN THE DISSIDENT TRIALS?

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A. NO, I DON'T HAVE AN OVERALL JUDGMENT ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TRAIN OF EVENTS.

OBSOLETELY, THESE PARTICULAR TWO DECISIONS WHICH CAME DOWN ON THE 18TH OF JULY HAVE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ABILITY OF AMERICAN JOURNALISTS TO DO THEIR WORK IN THE SOVIET UNION. BUT I DON'T HAVE AN OVERALL TREND OR JUDGMENT ON POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS.

Q. HAS THE DEPARTMENT BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ANY SOVIET CORRESPONDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES?

I RECALL THAT AT THE TIME THE WHITNEY-PIPER CASE FIRST BROKE, SEVERAL SOVIET CORRESPONDENTS WERE CALLED INTO THE WHITE HOUSE FOR WHAT WAS CALLED A REVIEW OF THEIR CREDENTIALS.

A. YES.

Q. HAS ANY ACTION BEEN TAKEN THIS MORNING?

A. NOT THAT I AM AWARE OF. I WILL BE HAPPY TO CHECK THAT, BUT I AM FAIRLY SURE THAT NO SUCH ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN THIS MORNING.

Q. TOM, IN THE PAST, WE HAVE TAKEN RETALIATORY ACTION AGAINST THE RUSSIANS. CAN YOU TELL ME WHETHER THERE IS ANY DIFFERENCE IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT OF THINGS THAT WOULD RULE OUT RETALIATORY ACTION BY THE UNITED STATES IN EXPELLING SOVIET JOURNALISTS?

A. NO, I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT FOR YOU. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.

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Q. TOM, ON THE WHITNEY-PIPER THING -- ONE OTHER QUESTION: WOULD YOU ANTICIPATE THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL WAIT UNTIL THIS CASE IS FINALLY DISPOSED OF, IN THE SENSE THAT WHITNEY AND PIPER MAKE THEIR DECISION -- AND THE SUN AND THE TIMES MAKE THEIR DECISIONS -- AS TO WHAT TO DO ABOUT THIS ORDER, AND THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT MAKES ITS DECISION

ABOUT WHAT THEY DO OR DON'T DO -- BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES WHAT ACTION IT MIGHT TAKE?

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO ADDRESS THE TIMING OF ANY POSSIBLE ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT BE UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Q. TOM, I AM READING MY NOTES OVER HERE, AND THE STRONGEST WORD YOU HAVE USED IS DEPLORE. IS THAT ALL THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS TO SAY ABOUT THIS?

MALCOLM TOON WAS A LOT STRONGER, AND I EVEN THINK THE PEOPLE WHO WERE UP AT THAT LECTURN A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO WERE STRONGER WHEN THE ACTION TOOK PLACE. NOW THAT IT'S HAPPENED, YOU SIMPLY LET IT GO AT DEPLORE?

A. I STAND BY WHAT I SAY. THAT IS OUR REACTION AT THIS TIME.

Q. IS THERE A DECISION TO PLAY THIS VERY COOL?

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO ADDRESS THAT QUESTION. YOU HAVE OUR STATEMENT, YOU HAVE OUR POSITION, YOU HAVE OUR REACTION.

Q. DO YOU CONSIDER THE \$1,600.00 COURT COSTS EXHORBITANT, OR NORMAL, OR WHAT? DO YOU HAVE ANY VIEW ON THAT?

A. I REALLY DON'T.

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I AM NOT AN EXPERT IN SOVIET LAW. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL THERE, AND I DON'T HAVE A SPECIFIC REACTION TO THAT.

Q. TOM, IF THE TWO NEWS ORGANIZATIONS REFUSED TO PAY THE FINES AND, THEREFORE, THEIR CORRESPONDENTS DID NOT

HAVE THEIR CREDENTIALS RENEWED, THEN WOULD THAT PROVIDE
THE BASIS FOR NOT RENEWING CREDENTIALS OF TASS CORRESPOND-
ENTS HERE?

A. SORRY, DICK, THAT'S A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION, AND WE
ARE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT COMES ABOUT.

Q. THANK YOU. END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LITIGATION, PRESS CONFERENCES, JOURNALISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE181866
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: TTHOMPSON:AJ
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780295-0619
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780746/aaaabmka.tel
Line Count: 232
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 91135171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1964469
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHITNEY/PIPER CASES: NOON PRESS BRIEFING FOLLOWING ARE PORTIONS OF NOON PRESS BRIEFING DEALING WITH WHITNEY/PIPER CASES.
TAGS: PEPR, SOPN, CGEN, PROP, UR, US
To: MOSCOW
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/91135171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014